Just Be: An Interactive Experience for K-12 Students
Diane Cessna, Kay Connelly, Beth Plale, Katie Siek, and Amanda Stephano

In 2000, only 10% of undergraduate computer science degrees at Indiana University – Bloomington (IUB) were awarded to women. This problem is not limited to Indiana University since only 28% of women receive undergraduate computer science degrees nationally. Fortunately, 65% of IUB’s student body is from the state of Indiana giving the Women in Computing (WIC) group an opportunity to inform local K-12 schools about interesting fields in computing that will hopefully one day translate into more women in IUB’s computing programs.

To get students interested in science and technology, WIC created an interactive presentation called Just Be that is loosely based off of Carnegie Mellon University’s (CMU) Outreach Roadshow. The presentation includes an introduction of the presenters, an interactive component where audience members use voting modules to participate in polls challenging personal stereotypes and an overview of interesting fields of computing to spark people's interests. The presentation can be personalized to fit any age group and presenters take time to meet with girls at the schools.

Just Be is good for local schools because it exposes their students to fields of computing that they might not be aware of - this is especially true in schools that do not have computing courses or labs. The presentation also shows students that people in science and technology are not stereotypical geeks – a factor that deters students from entering computing fields. Just Be benefits our WIC group by giving women exposure to public speaking, opportunities for interactions between graduates and undergraduates, and community service.

Just Be has been presented at several local schools and conferences. In the future, we will present at more schools and work with local universities to create more outreach programs. Our paper will detail the development of Just Be and how our presentation has influenced students thus far.